



US Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine

11 February 2005

Health Information Operations Weekly Update



The HIO Update provides information regarding global medical and veterinary issues of interest to the United States Army. The update does not attempt to analyze the information as to its strategic or tactical impact on the US Army and should not be regarded as a medical intelligence product. Medical intelligence products are available from the [Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center](#). The information in the HIO Update should provide an increased awareness of current and emerging health-related issues.

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HOT TOPICS

Dracunculiasis Eradication Status, 2004

4 February - Weekly Epidemiological Record reported that [dracunculiasis](#) (guinea-worm disease) is the largest tissue parasite in humans. The disease is characterized by the emergence of a female worm, measuring 0.6–0.9 meters in length, from the body of the sufferer, usually the legs. Of 20 countries that were endemic when the dracunculiasis eradication initiative began in the early 1980s, only 11 were still endemic in 2004, and all are in Africa: Ghana and Sudan accounted for more than 90% of the total number of the global cases reported in 2004. The number of cases was reduced by nearly half, from 32,193 in 2003 to about 15,000 in 2004. On 22 May 2004, resolution WHA57/9 to eradicate dracunculiasis was adopted by the World Health Assembly. [View Article](#)

Heart Stem Cells Found In Newborns

10 February – Sign on San Diego reported that researchers have found heart stem cells in human newborns, rats and mice, a discovery that could lead to novel treatments for pediatric [cardiac disease](#). Called isl1+ cells, these cardiac stem cells were able to grow in the lab into fully functioning heart cells.

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Eighth Annual Force Health Protection Conference

[Conference Home](#)

What is the Force Health Protection Conference?

The theme for the 2005 Conference is "**Force Health Protection – Future Force Enabler.**" Our conference mission is to advance technology, to better sustain the soldier in garrison or during deployments that may involve Weapons of Mass Destruction, to provide information of benefit to first responders, and to bolster everyday response capabilities. Our primary focus is the soldier.

Who hosts the FHP Conference?

The Conference is hosted by the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, a subordinate command of the U.S. Army Medical Command.

Who should attend the FHP Conference?

Last year, over 1500 individuals attended the Force Health Protection Conference. We had over 90 exhibitors, more than 80 poster presentations, and over 400 technical presentations. We expect

Scientists had thought the cells are absent after birth, but the team at the University of California San Diego said it located a small number of them within an atrium of the heart. In the lab, they were able to take a few of the cells and multiply them into millions of mature cardiac stem cells. The study suggests that isl1+ cells could be harvested from an individual's heart tissue, multiplied in a laboratory setting and implanted into the patient. Researchers found that isl1+ cells are programmed to become heart-muscle cells that begin to beat once they are exposed to other heart cells. These stem cells are found in regions of the atrium typically discarded during heart surgery.

[View Article](#)

Kaiser Study Links Autism, Mother's Ailments

8 February – The Times-Herald reported that expectant mothers with asthma or allergies had a 50 percent increased risk that their children would develop [autism](#) disorders. Among all children treated at Kaiser, one in 200 have autism spectrum disorders, which range from severe autism to milder Asperger syndrome. Of the children of mothers who had asthma or allergies during pregnancy, one in 133 had autism spectrum disorders. Even with the increased rate, the overall risk is still small - fewer than 1 percent in children of women who have asthma during pregnancy. She also noted that the findings have not yet been replicated. "If it is, in fact, found in other studies, it suggests there is something going on with mom's immune system during pregnancy," the researcher said. [View Article](#)

Races Respond Differently to Asthma Drugs

7 February – Forbes reported that race may affect a person's response to [asthma](#) medications. The study of almost 400 patients with asthma and 202 patients without asthma found that asthmatic and non-asthmatic black Americans required higher doses of glucocorticoid medications to suppress lymphocytes, cells that play a major role in airway inflammation. This finding led the researchers to speculate that blacks may be predisposed to diminished medication response, which could make their asthma control more difficult. "Regardless of asthma status or severity, African-Americans in our study required higher doses of glucocorticoid than Caucasians to inhibit proliferation of these inflammatory cells," study lead author Dr. Ronina A. Covar, of the National Jewish Medical and Research Center in Denver, said in a prepared statement. [View Article](#)

Report: Mercury Levels in Vaccines Eyed

8 February – ABC News reported that a 1991 memo from the drug maker Merck & Co. shows that its executives were

2005 to be another exceptional year for the Force Health Protection Conference. Military, Veterans Administration professionals, DoD civilian professionals, and security professionals, and educators working in the areas of environmental health, occupational and preventive medicine, health promotion and wellness, population health, and behavioral health should plan to attend this event.

concerned about high levels of [mercury](#) in children's vaccinations nearly eight years before health officials disclosed a similar finding. Six-month-old children who received shots could get a mercury dose up to 87 times higher than guidelines for the maximum daily consumption of mercury from fish. The memo came at a time when health authorities were recommending shots for children that contained an anti-bacterial compound called thimerosal which contains mercury. In 1999, federal health officials concluded that routine vaccinations were exposing many infants to quantities of mercury above health guidelines. The U.S. Public Health Service said there was no evidence of harm but urged manufacturers to avoid mercury in vaccines. [View Article](#)

Researchers Call for Prenatal Screening for Parasite

9 February – CNN reported that few pregnant women or infants are routinely tested for toxoplasmosis, which can cause blindness and brain damage in babies. The infection can be contracted during pregnancy if a woman cleans a cat litter box, gardens or eats raw eggs or meat. The infection is caused by the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. Recent research found that even if doctors ask all the right questions to find known risk factors, they miss about half the women who give birth to babies with toxoplasmosis. [View Article](#)

Service Stops Some from Giving Blood

5 February – The Richmond-Times Dispatch reported that a growing number of military personnel are unable to donate blood because of their recent service abroad. [Temporary deferrals](#) typically last between six months and three years while other deferrals may be indefinite. Restrictions on donation affect military personnel returning from areas of the Middle East where malaria is endemic; Iraq, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia because of the parasitic disease Leishmaniasis; and parts of Europe and the United Kingdom where mad-cow disease may pose a risk. Service members returning from Turkey and Oman also may face certain donor restrictions. The military has been forced to institute similar deferrals of donations to its own blood banks. [View Article](#)

ON THE INTERNET

For more information, go to the [Armed Services Blood Program](#)

Vietnam Seeks Help to Fight Bird Flu

3 February – The Kansas City Star reported that Vietnam has appealed to the United Nations to help it fight a raging [bird flu](#) outbreak that has killed 12 people over the past five weeks. Agriculture Minister Cao Duc Phat sent a letter to the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization

asking that experts be sent to help Vietnamese specialists map out a plan of action to control the disease's spread. The minister also asked the two U.N agencies to help coordinate foreign assistance sent to Vietnam for the best use of resources. Vietnam will begin testing vaccines from the Netherlands and China on 6,000 birds later this month. The poultry will be closely monitored for six months to determine its effectiveness before mass vaccinations are considered, he said.

[View Article](#)

Waist Not, Heart Risk Not

10 February – CBS News reported that your waistline is a window to your heart's health. Waist size is a better predictor of [heart disease](#) than total body fat. Larger waists mean greater heart disease risk. Scientists have pinpointed the exact numbers to watch out for. Using a tape measure is easier than calculating your body mass index (BMI) and it's also better at assessing heart disease risk. Men should strive for a waist size of 35 or under and women 32 or under. The researchers found that waist size correlated better than BMI with risk factors for heart disease — high blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol. [View Article](#)

Focus on Epidemiology

HIV Transmission among Black Women --- North Carolina, 2004

4 February – MMWR reported that in 2003, women constituted 28% of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome ([HIV/AIDS](#)) cases in the United States; approximately 69% of those cases were among non-Hispanic black women. Heterosexual transmission is now the most commonly reported mode of HIV transmission among women. In North Carolina, black women make up a growing proportion of newly reported HIV infections and, in 2003, the HIV-infection rate for black women in North Carolina was 14 times higher than that for white women. In August 2004, the North Carolina Department of Health (NCDOH) invited CDC to assist in an epidemiologic investigation of HIV transmission among black women in North Carolina. This report summarizes the results of that investigation, which indicated that the majority of HIV-positive and HIV-negative sexually active black women in North Carolina reported HIV sexual risk behaviors. Three statistically significant differences were identified. Women receiving public assistance and who had a lifetime history of genital herpes infection were significantly more likely to be HIV-positive. However, women who discussed sexual and behavioral history with their male partners were less likely to be HIV-positive. [View Report](#)

DoD-GEIS: NAMRU-2 Outbreak Preparedness-Cambodia

10 February - [Naval Medical Research Unit-2](#) (NAMRU-2; Jakarta, Indonesia) supports outbreak preparedness in Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) through an extensive syndromic surveillance network (Early Warning Outbreak Recognition System [EWORS]), outbreak response training workshops, and provision of laboratory diagnostics and facilities. Since 1998, NAMRU-2 has developed outbreak detection and response capacity in Cambodia using DoD-GEIS, US CDC, and PACOM support. Recently, these efforts facilitated timely notification involving the first human case of H5N1 (Avian) Influenza in Cambodia, prompting critical response actions. The 25-year-old woman from Kampot province on the border with Vietnam died with fever and respiratory symptoms on 30 Jan 2005, 2 days after admission to a Vietnamese hospital. The death was reported to the Cambodian Outbreak Hotline, which the Cambodian CDC and NAMRU-2 developed in 2003 as part of a broader joint effort to coordinate outbreak detection and response across Cambodia for the first time. The Hotline links 24 Provincial Health Units to epidemiologic and laboratory capacity at the Cambodian CDC and NAMRU-2. The Hotline reported the case to the Cambodian CDC and NAMRU-2, expediting confirmation of H5N1 by the Pasteur Institute-Vietnam and joint Cambodian CDC/WHO/Pasteur Institute-Cambodia epidemiologic and laboratory investigation of humans and animals in the woman's village (no other human or animal infections were found). Other current activities for NAMRU-2 GEIS include post-tsunami outbreak surveillance in Aceh province, Indonesia and long-standing surveillance for enteric, parasitic, and viral diseases in Southeast Asia. Information on many "hot topics" such as WNV, Influenza (avian and human), Leishmaniasis and severe respiratory syndromes, including SARS, is available on the [DoD-GEIS website](#).

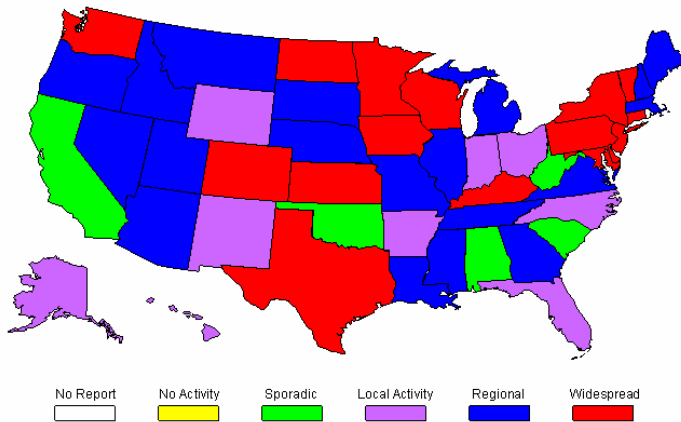
Influenza Update

[CDC Weekly Influenza Report for Week Ending 29 January – Week 4](#)

From 23 -29 January 2005, influenza activity continued to increase in the United States. Four hundred seventy-four (15.9%) specimens tested were positive for influenza viruses. There have been four influenza-associated pediatric deaths reported to CDC this season.

Weekly Influenza Activity Estimates Reported by State & Territorial Epidemiologists

Week ending January 29, 2005 - Week 4



European Influenza Surveillance Scheme Report for Week Ending 30 January – Week 4

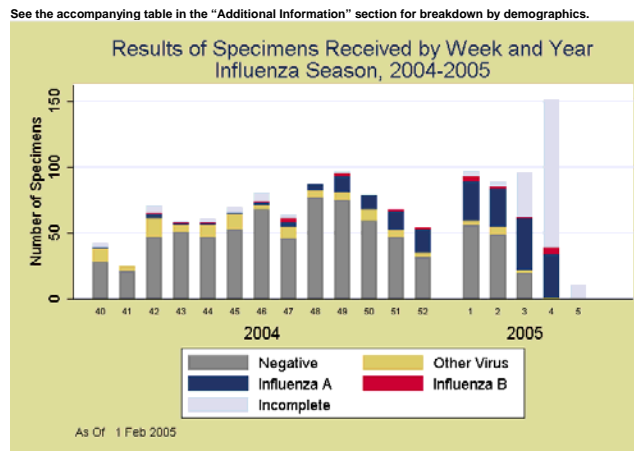
Clinical activity decreased in Spain and in Portugal in week 04/2005. An increase in clinical activity was reported by the majority of countries participating in EISS: influenza activity particularly increased in Switzerland and Italy, but also in the neighboring countries such as Austria, France and Slovenia. In general, children aged 0-4, followed by children aged 5-14 were most affected. The dominant virus in Europe is A(H3) and most of these are A/Wellington/1/2004 (H3N2)-like viruses.



DOD Worldwide Influenza Surveillance Program for

Week Ending 29 January – Week 4

Since 3 October 2004, the Epidemiological Surveillance Division (AFIOH/SDE) has processed 1118 specimens as part of the influenza surveillance program. Of those specimens, 202 (18%) were positive for influenza A and 24 (2%) were positive for influenza B. In addition, 196 specimens are still being processed.



Other timely information can be found in:

The current issue of the Army Medical Surveillance Activity's [*Medical Surveillance Monthly Report*](#)

This week's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [*Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*](#)

USCENTCOM

Malaria in US Army Rangers Returning From Afghanistan

12 January – The Journal of the American medical Association reported that with many US military personnel currently deployed throughout the world, military and civilian health care professionals may encounter imported [malaria](#) from this population. A total of 38 cases of malaria were identified in a 725-man Ranger Task Force that deployed to eastern Afghanistan between June and September 2002. The 38 patients were infected with *Plasmodium vivax*, yielding an attack rate of 52.4 cases per 1000 soldiers. Diagnosis was confirmed a median of 233 days after return from the malaria endemic region. Delayed clinical presentation can occur with *P vivax*. Symptoms are often vague, but malaria should be included in the differential diagnosis for soldiers returning from an endemic region. From an anonymous post-deployment survey of 72% of the task force, the self-reported compliance

rate was 52% for weekly chemoprophylaxis, 41% for post-deployment chemoprophylaxis, 31% for both weekly and terminal chemoprophylaxis, 82% for treating uniforms with permethrin, and 29% for application of insect repellent. [View Article Summary](#)

Undiagnosed Respiratory Deaths - Afghanistan (Badakhshan)

8 February – ProMED reported that a contagious unknown respiratory disease killed more than 21 people over the past 2 days in northeastern Afghanistan. The nature of the disease wasn't immediately clear. Ghafour Dawar, the chief of public health in Faizabad, the provincial capital, said that the victims in the remote Koof district of Badakhshan province died due to respiratory problems. "We are concerned about it. It seems the disease is a contagious one," he said, without elaborating. Dawar added that doctors could only reach Koof through neighboring Tajikistan due to the heavy snowfall in the area. The fatalities bring the total number of people who have lost their lives of diseases related to the tough winter weather in Afghanistan over the past month to almost 100. The obvious suspect for the etiology of these deaths would be influenza, considering that this is a relatively isolated population with reduced access to health care. [View Article](#)

USEUCOM

Architect Accused of Bug Deaths

8 February –BBC News reported that the negligence of an architect caused the death of seven people in one of the UK's worst outbreaks of [Legionnaires' disease](#). Preston Crown Court was told Gillian Beckingham failed to properly maintain an air conditioning unit at the Barrow arts centre, where the outbreak began. She and the Barrow Borough Council deny seven counts of unlawful killing and breaching safety rules but she admits breaking health and safety laws. Ms. Beckingham was in charge of the air conditioning unit at Forum 28 arts, when it sprayed deadly bacteria into the air. The outbreak led to the deaths of six women and one man and infected nearly 200 other people. Alistair Webster QC, prosecuting, told the jury, "It was an outbreak that could have been avoided by the exercise of a moderate amount of care." [View Article](#)

Chad-Sudan: Vaccination Completed after Meningitis Outbreak

8 February – Reuters reported that health workers have completed a 12-day drive to vaccinate 72,000 people against [meningitis](#) following an outbreak of the highly contagious

"We have completed the vaccination of nearly 72,000 people in the Treguine, Bredjing, Farchana camps and the population within a five km radius of the camps, which represents a 89 percent coverage rate," Doctor Camilo Kuan, the head of WHO emergency operations in eastern Chad, said. Treguine, Bredjing and Farchana are located near the border town of Adre. Together, they host a third of the 213,000 refugees from Darfur. Kuan said 19 suspected cases of meningitis had been reported in the three camps during January, of which six had been confirmed. One person had died from the disease. [View Article](#)

Dolly's Creator Granted Human Cloning License

8 February – Reuters reported that the scientist who created Dolly the sheep, the world's first cloned mammal, was granted a license to [clone](#) human embryos for medical research. Professor Ian Wilmut, of the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, plans to obtain stem cells for research into Motor Neuron Disease (MND), a procedure that divides the medical world along ethical lines. Britain's cloning watchdog, the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority (HFEA), granted the license Tuesday to Wilmut, Dr Paul de Sousa from Edinburgh and Professor Christopher Shaw from King's College London. It is only the second such license granted in Britain. Wilmut said in a statement, "This is not reproductive cloning in any way." Human reproductive cloning is illegal in Britain but therapeutic cloning, creating embryos as a source of stem cells to cure diseases, is allowed on an approved basis. [View Article](#)

Health Probe Amid Student Mumps Outbreak

7 February – Ireland On-Line reported that health professionals are investigating an outbreak of [mumps](#) among the student population, with 45 cases of the illness detected in the first three weeks of this year. This compares to just one mumps case in the same period last year. The outbreak, which is mainly affecting the 18-24 age group, was first detected last October and, by the end of 2004, the incidence had increased 10-fold. Many of those contracting the illness were born too early to have received the MMR vaccine as babies. [View Article](#)

Tuberculosis Prompts Dutch Health Investigation

7 February – ProMED reported that the largest [tuberculosis](#) (TB) investigation in Dutch history begins in Zeist on Mon 31 Jan 2005. Five percent of the 15,000 people undergoing tests are expected to have been infected with the bacteria. An employee of a C1000 supermarket in the central Dutch city was diagnosed with a very infectious form of TB in November 2004. Initial tests confirmed that the 25-year-old man's entire family and 40 of his 79 colleagues have also been infected. Zeist City

Council and the health authority GGD Midden-Nederland decided to examine every customer who shopped at the supermarket between 18 Nov 2004 and 1 Jan 2005 based on a telephone survey. [View Article](#)

USNORTHCOM

Bush Would Boost Funds for FDA Drug Safety Office

7 February – Reuters reported that the Bush administration proposed a 24 percent increase in funding for the Food and Drug Administration office that monitors the [safety of drugs](#) after they hit the market. The proposal follows last year's withdrawal of a well-known painkiller and charges that the FDA pays too little attention to serious side effects that emerge after drugs win approval. The additional \$6.5 million would be used in part to hire 25 more employees for the Office of Drug Safety, Kathy Heuer, the FDA's chief financial officer, said in an interview. The drug safety office came under scrutiny last year when a veteran scientist said his FDA supervisors ignored or downplayed his warnings about risks of Merck & Co. Inc.'s arthritis drug Vioxx. [View Article](#)

Cuba Bans Smoking in Many Public Places



7 February – Yahoo! News reported that Cuba, known for its high-quality cigars, banned smoking of all kinds in public places as the government acknowledged the health risk of tobacco. Smoking will be banned in restaurants, except in designated areas, and cigarette machines also will be removed. The law will also suspend sales of cigarettes to children under age 16 and at stores less than 100 yards from schools. According to government statistics, four of every 10 Cubans smoke, and 30 percent of the 15,000 deaths from preventable cancers each year can be linked to smoking. Tobacco is the communist-run island's third-largest export — producing an average of 150 million hand-rolled cigars worth about \$200 million a year — and is recognized worldwide for its quality. [View Article](#)

India (Punjab) – Hepatitis Outbreak

8 February – ProMED reported that an outbreak of jaundice has affected some areas of Uttam Nagar, with about 65 cases of [hepatitis](#) being detected today by a team of Health Department officials. Forty percent of the patients reside in Streets Number 2 and 3 of Uttam Nagar. The residents here say that some of these patients had been suffering from jaundice for 4-6 weeks, and were taking treatment from quacks, self-styled sadhus, tantriks, or by tying a taveez on their arm. Health authorities

been distributed among the residents, and we are educating them about ways to prevent jaundice too." [View Article](#)

Indonesia: Emergency Declared Following 44 Rabies Deaths

9 February = ProMED reported that the government of Lembata regency declared an emergency situation after 44 people died in the 1st week of February 2005 due to [rabies](#). The latest victim was a 7-year-old, who died on Thu 5 Feb 2005 after being bitten by a rabid dog. In order to control the outbreak the government has shot dead 212 dogs suspected of having the virus and is now hunting down more. The government will also vaccinate the remaining healthy dogs in the regency. [View Article](#)

Influenza Found in Turkey Flock in North Carolina

8 February – ProMED reported that a turkey breeder flock in Sampson County, North Carolina has been confirmed to have H3N2 [influenza](#). The most likely source of the virus is a swine herd in the area. The flock was late in its laying cycle when one house experienced a drop in egg production. The flock was processed shortly thereafter. On 14 Jan 2005, the National Veterinary Services Laboratory confirmed that the virus isolated from the flock at Rollins laboratory was a subtype H3N2 influenza virus. This diagnosis has significance for those that export to the Russian Federation, said state veterinary officials. The export agreements made with Russia include the requirement to report all subtypes of influenza diagnosed in commercial poultry. [View Article](#)

New Anti-Clotting Drug Shows Mixed Results

9 February – Health Day reported that two studies sharpen the debate about the potential benefits and risks of a new anti-clotting drug. The drug, sold as Exanta (ximelagatran), is a potential replacement for Coumadin (warfarin), which can prevent [stroke](#) in people with atrial fibrillation. The first study compared Exanta with Coumadin in 3,922 people with atrial fibrillation and other risk factors for stroke. The researchers found the incidence of stroke was slightly higher for those who took Exanta. There was no difference in the incidence of major bleeding episodes, but the overall incidence of bleeding episodes was about a third lower for those who took Exanta. However, levels of enzymes indicating possible liver damage rose to greater than three times the normal limit in 6 percent of patients taking Exanta. The second study compared Coumadin against Exanta in people with deep vein thrombosis. The risk of recurring blood clots was virtually the same in both groups. The risk of major bleeding was much lower for the Exanta group, and liver enzyme levels rose to greater than three times normal

in 9.6 percent of those taking Exanta. [View Article](#)

New Flu Strain Clouds Vaccine Pick

7 February – The San Francisco Chronicle reported that a new strain of [influenza](#) that turned up first in Santa Clara County six weeks ago is rapidly emerging in the United States, complicating efforts to pick the right vaccine for next year's flu shots. The flu strain is a variant of the predominant A/Fujian virus, which is responsible for most of the influenza in the country this winter. Dubbed A/California, the new strain does not appear to be any more virulent than the older one, which has produced a mild flu season so far this year. However, its rapid emergence raises questions of whether this season's vaccine will work against a late surge of a new viral strain. Until recently, it looked like the primary candidate for the new vaccine was A/Wellington. It has yet to appear in the United States but is now emerging as the dominant strain in flu outbreaks in Europe. [View Article](#)

Routine HIV Screening Cost-Effective

9 February - USA TODAY reported that routine testing for the virus that causes [AIDS](#) buys an extra 1½ years of life for those who are found to be infected. The cost is comparable to screening for diabetes, high blood pressure and colon cancer. The studies use computer models to examine the cost-effectiveness of more widespread testing for HIV. The researchers conclude that early treatment not only prolongs life, but it also helps stop the virus from spreading by blocking it from multiplying and reducing patients' infectiousness. Treatment also can link patients to counseling, which offers motivation to avoid infecting other sex partners. [View Article](#)

Wal-Mart Pays \$14.5 Million for California Gun Law Violations

4 February – FindLaw reported that Wal-Mart Stores Inc. has agreed to pay \$14.5 million to settle charges by the California attorney general that it committed "thousands of violations" of state [gun safety laws](#) at five stores. The retail giant will pay \$5 million in fines and civil penalties, provide more than \$4 million to fund state compliance checks, and pledge to ensure its compliance with laws governing the sale of ammunition to minors. The company allegedly failed to conduct required background checks on both gun buyers and the Wal-Mart employees who sell firearms. It also delivered guns to 23 people identified by the state as prohibited from buying guns and delivered firearms to 36 prohibited buyers through "straw purchases" carried out by relatives or friends. [View Article](#)

Whooping Cough Hit Wisconsin Hard in 2004

4 February – The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that [whooping cough](#) was diagnosed in Milwaukee and elsewhere in 2004 at a rate unseen since the 1940s. State health officials reported 5,162 confirmed and probable cases statewide in 2004, accounting for perhaps 25% of all whooping cough cases in the nation. That compares with just 716 cases in Wisconsin the year before when the outbreak first took hold. [View Article](#)

USPACOM

Mystery Man Bounces Back From Avian Flu

5 February – The New York Times published an interesting article on the 14th victim and only survivor of [avian influenza](#) this winter, Nguyen Thanh Hung. [View Article](#) (registration required)

China has New Vaccine for Poultry

7 February – CBC News reported that Chinese scientists say they have developed a new vaccine that can protect poultry from [bird flu](#) for a longer period of time. Laboratory tests indicate the vaccine enables chickens, ducks and geese to fight the lethal H5N1 strain of bird flu, three weeks after flocks are vaccinated. The vaccine reportedly provides at least 10 months of protection for chickens and ducks, which is four months longer than the existing prevention drugs. Geese can be protected for three months. The vaccine will first be used in Chinese provinces bordering Vietnam and Thailand, both of which have seen a recent resurgence of the virus. Chinese officials are hoping the vaccine will help prevent the spread of bird flu from China's neighbors once birds begin migrating north. [View Article](#)



Dengue Fever Spreads to 25 Indonesian Provinces

8 February – Bloomberg reported that [dengue fever](#) has killed 92 people in Indonesia and spread to 25 of the country's 33 provinces this year. Seven provinces, including the nation's capital, Jakarta, and West Java have been put on emergency health alert because of the high number of people infected with the mosquito borne disease. The disease has infected 4,396 people in the world's fourth largest population. Efforts to prevent the spread of the disease include fogging large areas with insecticide and urging residents to clean stagnant pools, ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes, regularly. [View Article](#)

Hong Kong Aids Workers on SARS, Bird Flu

8 February – BBC News reported that Hong Kong employees who contract [SARS](#) or [bird flu](#) will find it easier to claim compensation. The territory has changed the law to recognize the risk posed by the two diseases. People working in high-risk occupations will have added protection as a result. More than 1,700 people in Hong Kong fell ill during the last SARS outbreak, many of them health workers who caught the disease while treating others. Often, they found it difficult to claim compensation from their employers. Because SARS was a new disease, it was not listed as an occupational hazard. The law now recognizes the threat and those at high risk of contracting either disease - such as medical and nursing staff, scientists or those handling poultry - will have special protection. The change in the law also means doctors will be obliged to inform the Labour Department of any cases they come across. [View Article](#)

India Begins AIDS Vaccine Trials on Humans

7 February – Reuters reported that India, with the world's second-largest [HIV](#) population after South Africa, began its first ever human trials of a new vaccine against the deadly virus. A vaccine is the best hope for the developing world where drugs remain out of reach for millions but efforts to find one have been hampered by HIV's uncanny ability to mutate. Human trials of vaccines against different strains of the virus are already being conducted in the United States, Europe, Africa and South America. "We've started the first phase of clinical trials, but 85 percent of our focus is still going to be on prevention," Anbumani Ramadoss said. "Developing a vaccine to prevent AIDS is one of the most difficult scientific challenges of our time. It is also one of the most urgent health needs." India has more than 5.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS and experts say the number could quadruple by 2010. [View Article](#)

Over 6000 Ducks Die of Blood Poisoning in Myanmar

8 February – ProMED reported that 6700 ducks in Katoke-Phayagi village in Myanmar have died of blood poisoning. The death of these ducks was due mainly to failure to vaccinate the birds against septicemia, the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department said. However, the disease stopped spreading after nearly 6000 other ducks were vaccinated in a 5-kilometer radius around the affected area, livestock officials said, adding that 5000 more ducks in the area are planned to receive the same treatment. [View Article](#)

Surveillance for Avian Influenza Stepped up in Cambodia

9 February 2005 - The World Health Organization (WHO)

and WHO have stepped up surveillance in Kampot Province, the scene of Cambodia's first human case of [avian influenza](#). Meanwhile, Cambodian officials have begun traveling from village to village in the region, warning about the dangers of infected poultry, while a local radio station has been making hourly broadcasts on the need to take precautions. At this stage, there is no evidence of human-to-human transmission. [View Article](#)

Thailand: Lab Tests Clear Boy Suspected Of Bird Flu

10 February – The Bangkok Post reported that a seven-year-old boy suspected of having [bird flu](#) has been cleared by health authorities, Deputy Public Health Minister Suchai Charoenrattanakul said. The boy was suspected of having bird flu when he fell ill after touching dead chickens in his village in the northern province's Phrom Phiram district. Deputy Prime Minister Chaturon Chaisaeng said yesterday the country was ready to give vaccines to poultry if there was a new severe bird flu outbreak. At present, Phitsanulok and Phichit provinces in the North and Suphan Buri in the Central Region are classified as bird flu-stricken areas. [View Article](#)

Vietnam Limits Bird Movement to Try to Halt Flu

7 February – CTV.ca reported that Vietnam has banned farmers from letting their ducks roam freely in canals and rice fields in the latest effort to combat [bird flu](#). The measure is expected to help keep the disease from spreading. Ducks traditionally stray for several kilometers, swimming on flooded rice paddies or eating leftover grains in harvested fields. The practice is especially common in the Mekong Delta, where multiple bird flu outbreaks have been reported. Duck farmers must now keep their flocks contained in cages or in their own ponds. The Department of Animal Health has also recommended that other major cities and provinces, including the capital Hanoi, adopt similar preventative measures already implemented in Ho Chi Minh City. The southern economic hub has slaughtered all ducks within its city limits and has banned the raising of poultry in the most populated areas. [View Article](#)



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Health Risks Increase In Guyana

7 February – The Pan American

Health Organization (PAHO) reported that [leptospirosis](#) has become a health concern in Guyana. Some 43 people were being treated for suspected cases of the bacterial disease, two deaths have been confirmed, and another nine suspected cases are being investigated. Dr. Bernadette Theodore-Gandi, PAHO/WHO representative in Guyana, warned that health workers should not to focus solely on leptospirosis.

"Leptospirosis has a wide range of symptoms that can mimic other diseases. We should be careful not to overlook the other diseases that may be a result of the flood, such as tuberculosis or pneumonia," she said. "In the coming weeks we should also be very alert to cases of vector-borne and water and food-borne diseases. The floods created an enormous breeding capacity for mosquitoes. We have to take into account that this may also lead to outbreaks of dengue." Prophylaxis is being distributed on a large scale in the flooded areas, with 120,000 persons already receiving a weekly preventive dose of 200 mg. of doxycycline. [View Article](#)